

# \*\*\*\*\* \* BMHA Newsletter \* \*\*\*\*\*



BICYCLE MOBILE HAMS OF AMERICA

Volume 10, Number 4

Oct/Nov/Dec 1999

## EDITOR'S NOTEPAD

### Time Passes

A while back we received this message from our longtime German member, Hans Boehm, DK8MO:

Dear friends,

With regret, I have to inform you that I must terminate my BMHA membership. The reason is, I'm too old, 72, and I'm not riding the bike very often anymore. But you should know that if one of the cycling hams comes to Augsburg and wishes any information or help about cycling here, I will help as long and as much as I am able.

With very best 73,

Hans Boehm, DK8MO, Landvogstrasse 6  
86156 Augsburg, Germany

Way back in the Jan. '91 newsletter we featured his lively QSL card. We thought you'd like to see it again.



At that time he wrote: "This card shows my daughter, Hannelorre, DK9MO, and myself, when she was 16 and I was 43. Now she's 37, has a family, and no time to go out cycling with her father. Hi. The tandem sits in the cellar waiting for use. Hi."

Hans, we at BMHA will miss you very much. We wish you a long life filled with many happy days!

BMHA has 3 foreign members, who, like Hans Boehm (above), stand ready to answer questions about cycling or hamming in their countries. Here they are, along with their e-mail addresses:

Jules Corben, VK2EXT, Oakley, NSW, Australia,  
jcorben@nibunetw.ccdn.otc.com.au



**RAILBIKING**, See ADVENTURE on page 3.

Ernst-Jan Eijlers, PA3FXS, Woerden, Netherland,  
ernst-jan\_eijlers@nl.ibm.com

Teddy Neeman, 4Z5JQ, Tel Aviv, Israel,  
teddy.neeman@motorola.com

### Last Chance!

Is all of your BMHA data (postal address, full zip, etc.) up to date, including your latest E-mail address? If not, send the data in before December 1st. We'll be compiling the BMHA Members and E-mail Directories and sending them out---and of course we all want them to be up to date---with the January 2000 issue of the BMHA Newsletter.

**Trip Looms:** Jean, N0EOX, and your editor, NAOA, are busy getting ready to leave for our flight to England, (See page 2 of previous issue.) Funny thing about taking a big trip,

*Continued on next page. See More NOTEPAD.*

## More NOTEPAD

*Continued from previous page.*

I start packing about a month ahead and then every day after that I'm checking the gear and fine-tuning and tweaking the packing until the final day. Gotta squeeze everything into tiny carry-on luggage, including HT and photo gear. Will report on our UK contacts, on-air and eyeball, in next issue.

Incidentally, if you are thinking about taking a trip that mixes in a little hamming in Great Britain, you'd be wise to connect ahead of time with the Web site for the Radio Society of Great Britain at: [www.rsgb.org](http://www.rsgb.org). The RSGB is equivalent to our ARRL. For repeater info go to <http://members.aol.com/rmcweb/rmc.htm>, the website for the Repeater Management Committee of the RSGB.

I got a lot of UK repeater and club details from these websites. Now the only difficulty I have to face is driving on the left hand side of the road and shifting with my left hand! No big deal—I've done it a couple of times before.

..... TREASURY.WPS 7 8 99

### BMHA Treasury Report

Fiscal year, July 1, 1998 to June 30, 1999.

Beginning bank balance:	4,337.78	
Monies received:	<u>3,474.00</u>	
Total:		7,811.78
Expenses:		
Printing and Xerox:	1,430.82	
Postage and mailing:	1,129.24	
Office supplies & expenses:	525.51	
Miscellaneous:	<u>417.33</u>	
Total Expenses:		<u>3,502.90</u>
Bank balance on hand, June 30, 1999:		\$4,308.88

.....

### Want a Mercedes?

Have you always wanted to own a Mercedes-Benz? Here's your chance. I was thumbing through a ritzy magazine, *Conde Nast Traveler*, and I saw a picture of a bicycle. Not an ordinary bike but a Mercedes-Benz! Their High-Performance Mountain Bike will cost you \$3495. Maybe a bit pricey but it looks like it's well worth it. And it folds up and goes into a surprisingly small traveling case. To get the impressive literature about this bike, just phone Mercedes at 1-800-367-6372. Don't miss this chance to be the first guy on your block to own a Mercedes!

### Worthy Websites:

Lee Devlin, K0LEE, has a very interesting website. It's at <http://members.aol.com/Lee810/ham.html>. Lee covers several of his hobbies, including of course his bicycle-mobile setup, along with Amateur Satellite Communication, and his home-built airplanes. Plus, he has a link to the BMHA Web site. Thanks, Lee. We would like all members with a personal website to provide a link to the BMHA website. It would help very much in recruiting new members. To get info on how to link, contact our webmaster Skip Lafetra, AA6WK, at [lafetra@ricochet.net](mailto:lafetra@ricochet.net).

Here's another biking website that's worth taking a look at: BMHA'er Patricia Kovacs, KC8HHH, is the webmaster for Lucent Technologies Bicycle Club, in Columbus, OH. Connect at: <http://home.att.net/~pkovacs/ccc.html>. This is a very active club. They have easy social rides, fast training rides, night rides, ice cream rides, breakfast rides, and Special Vacation Ride Events—a recent one being in France. When I see a ride schedule like this I want to move to Columbus and join this group! You don't have to be a Lucent employee, you just have to, as the home page says, "enjoy cycling and socializing, though not always in that order." I love it!

### Anybody for Cycling in Cuba?

Just got a brochure from a Canadian travel agency called "Cycling Connection". They lead bicycle tours in Cuba. Sounds very interesting: seven days, inn to inn, full support, etc. A chance to practice your Spanish. Cost for Americans is low because of present Canadian rate of exchange. For details, call toll free: 1-877-279-6589.

### More Time Passes

Got this card from Mary Duffield, WA6KFA:

*Love you guys and gals and BMHA, but gotta surrender my bike, as I near my 83rd birthday. Doctors say that lifelong biking has kept me going...energetically! Busy with great grandkids and sharing matriarchal wisdom. Pension's got to go for medications, etc. Comforts me to know that you-all are having a civilizing effect on our culture, as my great grandkids pedal into the future.*

73 and thanks,  
Mary Duffield, WA6KFA  
2355 Brommer St. # 23  
Santa Cruz, CA 95062-3557

I consulted with member John Einberger, N0MSA, who has had a lot of experience with several clubs dealing with cycling and hamming. John suggested that we award Mary with an Honorary Lifetime Membership and that we present her with an appropriate certificate.

On Sept 15, Skip Lafetra, AA6WK, with proper ceremony, presented Mary with a certificate designating her as a Lifetime Honorary Member.

Mary has been a ham for 24 years, but has been biking for 61 years! She has not owned a 'gas-guzzler' for 31 years. Mary, a retired teacher, has been a full-time volunteer teaching ham radio in FIVE local schools. Some of Mary's volunteer work involved taking groups of 40 or 50 students bicycling/sailing through the coastal network of Youth Hostels, an activity which has made her literally 'boatloads' of friends. Mary sailed with her students as far as Mexico, Panama, and Venezuela, before donating her boat to the Sea Scouts to continue the effort. Congratulations, Mary! You have already done more service than most of us dream about. It is our pleasure in BMHA to elect you an Honorary Lifetime Member!

—Hartley Alley, NAOA, Editor  
POB 4009 E-mail: [hartleya@ol.com](mailto:hartleya@ol.com)  
Boulder CO 80306-4009

# ADVENTURE!

## *Railbiking, a Novel Approach to Cycling*

Several years ago a local friend and I modified a couple of ladies bikes so that we could ride on abandoned railroad tracks. We've had lots of fun.



*Photo 1.*

My railbike was built from plans developed by Richard Bentley. They cost me \$20 and I found them to be very good. It was tricky to build, however, as the angles and measurements were critical. It does work very well. I have never fallen off the bike. Occasionally the rear wheel will slip off, as the tracks I ride on are not the best. It sure is a lot of fun and it is nice and quiet and peaceful riding through the woods.

The tracks I ride on, with permission, of course, are 99 percent abandoned. They tell me there is one train a week that goes out to a chemical plant. I have yet to see a train on my rides.

There is a dentist in Idaho (Richard Smart, 3502 Buckskin Rd., Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, 83814) who railbikes big time and goes on 200 mile trips on abandoned tracks. He's been railbiking for over 20 years and has gathered a lot of information about the sport. He emphasizes that railbiking is to be done only on abandoned tracks, or on a short rail line where permission has been given.

If you are interested in digging further, the best source is a book "Railbike", author Bob Mellin, cycling on abandoned railroads. The publisher is Balboa Publishing, San Anselmo, CA. E-mail: balboapub@aol.com.

Photo 1 was taken on our first test ride. My friend Ray Scott built his off my plans. We sure got a lot of attention that first day. We got even more attention when we railbiked

past several holes at the country club. It stopped play for a bit---you better believe it!



*Photo 2.*

The second photo needs a little explaining. I have modified the outrigger with a floating 12-inch wheel. I put the wheel there so I could easily mount my railbike on my Yakima roof-rack, a setup that works perfectly. However, I soon realized that the wheel also serves another purpose. When I get to a crossroad and want to turn around, or switch to riding on a regular road, the 12" wheel takes over. It rides on the pavement, and the outrigger wheels (skateboard wheels) are now dangling a couple inches above the pavement. I have ridden as much as a half mile on the three-wheel setup. The cowcatcher in front, when riding the rail, is hugging the sides of the track with two skateboard wheels.

You can hang all kinds of stuff on a railbike and I have, like ice chests. Hopefully one of these days I'll report on an all-rail bicycle-mobile trip I'm planning to take. That's my goal, so wait for further news.

—Miles Luke, KC5FRB

2203 Harmony St. E-mail: medcomkl@aol.com  
Monroe, LA 71201-3028

## *Your Bicycle Flies For Free!*

As a member of BMHA you get free transport of your bicycle, when you fly on Northwest Airlines. You save \$90 on a roundtrip flight. For details call Wild World of Travel, Missoula MT, 1-800-735-7109. Mention that you're a network member of Adventure Cycling.

## I LIKE MY SETUP

### Yaesu FT-50R at Home on Home-built Bike

I'm very proud of my recumbent bike, mainly because I built the frame myself. It's called a Ben Tech. It is a short-wheel-base, above-seat-steering model that's built to plans supplied by the designer Dom Bencivenga—for a meager \$30. He now offers several models and can supply completed frames. The designs are sound and the one I built performs quite well.

He suggests you can build an inexpensive recumbent from materials obtained from the local muffler shop, but also gives enough information in his plans for a more expensive model from 4130 chromo tubing. I went the more expensive route and am happy I did even though it required a good amount of labor and time. Now I have a real keeper. It is similar to the Vision with the single tube construction. I have ridden it for 2 years and upgraded the home-built seat to a Rans this past spring and added a used Zzipper fairing just this week.

For my radio setup I have a Yaesu FT-50R dual band HT which resides in a small TOTES cellular phone pouch attached to the back of the seat. I use a speaker mike usually attached to my helmet strap or the collar of my jersey. I also have a Radio Shack head-set that I am thinking about attaching to my helmet. The antenna I have been using is a Comet Super Slender SH55. I mounted it on the top of a small pvc mast that is connected to the seat and added a "tiger tail" ground plane. It works, but not as well as I would like. I will probably change to the type that it seems most of the BMHA riders I've met are using: the Larsen NMO-150 half-wave 2meter whip. My friend and BMHA member Rich Kuster N8ZDQ is set up that way and I will most likely follow his lead. He and I both have ridden with "recumbent man" Mike Nickolaus on RAGBRAI. This experience and my encouragement has Rich converted to a Rans Rocket recumbent this fall.

I may be crazy but have signed up with NBG-2000 to ride across America in 2000. Hopefully this NBG 2000 will come off as planned because I really am looking forward to the adventure.

—Mike Smith, KC8DKK  
2965 Reservoir Dr.  
Mogadore, OH 44260 miwals9942@aol.com

### Hints and Tips

Speaking of HF touring radios, I saw a very small HF QRP radio at the Flagstaff Hamfest. It is a kit, by Small Wonder Labs, and can't weight more than a couple ounces. It includes a keyer, RIT, and audio frequency annunciator. This rig would be ideal for backpacking or bicycle touring. Contact: Small Wonder Labs, Dave Benson, 80 East Robbins Ave. Newington CT 06111. Email: bensonjd@aol.com

There a number of miniature keyer paddles available and they can be found under many QRP web sites. The one I have, and like very much, is available at Whiterook Products, at [www.west.net/~wpc](http://www.west.net/~wpc).

—Jim Varner, AE6N  
Lake Havasu City, AZ <ae6n@ctaz.com>

## BMHA CW Net is Closed

Due to lack of radio contacts on our BMHA CW Net, it has been decided to put an end to the effort. The two net controls gave it a fair trial. They send this message:

"We called the net again and had no takers. We believe we have given the net the old college try, but it has not been too successful. Over the past year we have had only 10 members who checked in now and then, and a few non-members who wanted to know what BMHA meant.

We suggest that we close the net and just tell the members that if they are touring with an HF radio to notify us and we will make a schedule with them."

73,

Jim Varner, AE6N, Lake Havasu City AZ,

<ae6n@ctaz.com>

Mike Nickolaus, NF0N, South Sioux City NE.

<menicko@avalon.net>

(BMHA thanks Jim and Mike for the effort and time that they have devoted to this project, and, with them, welcomes any suggestions for other approaches to establishing a BMHA net.--Ed.)

## LETTERS

### Member on Bike Supports Big Event— Later Sees GPS Route in Color!

To BMHA:

This past Saturday, a group of local hams provided communications for the annual "Ride for Roswell" a fund raiser for a local cancer research and treatment center. 2200 bicycle riders covered routes ranging from 9 miles to 62.5 miles. The directors of the event, as well as sag wagons, sweep vehicles and Net Control communications were totally supported, at Net or in vehicle, by local hams. Of the 30 hams working the event, three of us were bicycle-mobile.

Thanks again for sending the BMHA promotional literature to be handing out at the Amateur Radio exhibit at the Erie County Fair. I noted that I was the only BMHA member on the bike-mobile support crew, so I took the opportunity to leave a few of the BHMA packets at Net Control. At least one of the packets was picked up by a ham before I left. (We gained a member shortly after that!--Ed.)

My friend, Dave, K2ECK, rode the 62-mile course with a GPS receiver strapped to his bike. Tonight, he showed me a map, printed out via Delorme Street Atlas 4.0, which showed his course route printed out in living color! This was a fantastic use of technology. It showed his exact route, including doubling back to help a rider with a flat tire, on a real road map. The application seems really neat for back country bike treks, eh?

—Tom Kocalski, KC2CAG

19 Pawtucket Row tom\_50@email.msn.com  
Orchard Park, NY 14127



## NEW MEMBERS

*We're pleased to add these names to our Membership List:*

Elmer Beachley, N3KIL, POB 18046, Pittsburgh PA 15236  
Donald Crow, WA6WJA, 3927 Via Manzana, San Clemente CA 92673  
Lee Devlin, K0LEE, 5530 26th St., Greeley CO 80634  
Kenneth Fellers, WB8DUY, 41 E. Main, Phillipsburg OH 45354  
Danny Grandstaff, KB8RIM, 819 Linden Av., Zanesville OH 43701  
David J Green, KC2BLF, 17 Wildwood Pl., Buffalo NY 14210  
Paul Markham, KC0BCL, 2790 W. 22nd St., Loveland CO 80538

*With traditional ham friendliness, make contact with these new members, welcome them to BMHA, and help them with any problems they might have.*

## REMINDERS

**Back Issues Still Available.** You may purchase any of the 36 back issues of the BMHA NewsLetter for \$1.50 each, postpaid. For info on the contents of the various issues send a business-size SASE to: BMHA, POB 4009, Boulder CO 80306-4009, and ask for the Index of Back Issues. This service available to members only.

**For Sale.** Do you have bicycle-mobile-related radio equipment for sale? Send in a description and we'll run it. Limit of 20 words, plus your name, address, phone. For members only.

**If you tell us your bike tour plans** we'll publish them in the NewsLetter and help make it possible for you to meet fellow BMMHAers in person or on radio as you pedal along. Just send in your route and the dates.

**When you write a plug for BMHA** (and please do!) in your local club's newsletter, be sure to include this information:

"The annual dues is \$10. To receive a sample copy of the BMHA Newsletter and other bike-mobile info send an SASE to BMHA, Box 4009-RC, Boulder CO 80306." This will save our club a lot of trouble and expense. Info will be sent next day.

Here's a quick, slick way to tell potential members about

BMHA: Have them connect with our website at:

<http://www.lafetra.com/bmha/>

## BMHA Website Keeps Improving

We are slowly improving the BMHA website at its new location of <http://www.LaFetra.com/BMHA>. Why don't you stop by and give it a look? Share this site with your friends. You'll be able to show them the newsletter cover page with each issue—and usually one of the feature articles as well.

Do you have your own website? Want to see the sites of other BMHA members? To do this just check out: <http://www.lafetra.com/BMHA/WebMembers.htm> for the latest list. Want to add your own site to this list? Just drop me a note at [Webmaster@LaFetra.com](mailto:Webmaster@LaFetra.com) and you'll be quickly added.

---Skip La Fetra, AA6WK, BMHA Webmaster  
Sunnyvale, CA E-mail: [Skip@LaFetra.com](mailto:Skip@LaFetra.com)

## BMHA NEWSLETTER

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Russell Dwarshuis, KB8U Len Koppl, KD0RC

Mike Nickolaus, NF0N Bob Pulhuj, KE8ZJ

**Chairman and Founder:** Hartley Alley, NA0A

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Permission given to reproduce any of the material in this issue, provided the author is credited and the source is acknowledged as "from the Newsletter of the Bicycle Mobile Hams of America." Please send clip to address below.

We welcome articles, suggestions, letters, announcements, photos, artwork — anything pertaining to the combining of bicycling with amateur radio.

The BMHA is affiliated with Adventure Cycling Assoc., League of American Bicyclists, and *Worldradio*.

Phone: 303-494-6559 E-mail: [hartleyal@aol.com](mailto:hartleyal@aol.com)

BICYCLE MOBILE HAMS OF AMERICA (BMHA)

Box 4009, Boulder, CO 80306-4009

Web site: [www.lafetra.com/bmha/](http://www.lafetra.com/bmha/)

## ABOUT BMHA

### *For the information of our first-time readers*

Bicycle Mobile Hams of America got its start when a 'Stray' in the June '89 QST magazine asked to "get in touch with hams who operate their radios while bicycle-mobile", signed by Hartley Alley, NA0A. Twenty five hams responded, filled out questionnaires, and received a summary of the collected data.

In April of '90 we had our first BMHA Forum at the Dayton HamVention. We played to a packed house, overflowed the room, and added 54 names to our mailing list. Our eight subsequent forums have drawn increasingly larger audiences, and now BMHA is firmly established as a 'regular' at this world-renowned event.

This is the thirty-seventh issue of our quarterly newsletter, which has become the clearing house for the exchange of info and ideas for the hams who go on the air from their bicycles. Since the last issue of this newsletter we have added 8 new members. The total membership now stands at 448, with members in 46 states, and six countries. BMHA is affiliated with Adventure Cycling Association, the League of American Bicyclists (LAB), and *Worldradio*.

BMHA membership puts you in touch with a friendly and helpful group of bike-riding hams. You'll make contacts through our membership directory and E-mail address list, our HF net on 40 meters, annual meeting and Forum at the Dayton HamVention and other regional meetings, and of course through the BMHA NewsLetter, which has articles on bike trips, antennas, other gear, operating tips, etc. Membership application blank on next to last page.

# PRODUCT REVIEW

## Testing the Tiny Yaesu VX-1R

I'm sure that you have all seen---and drooled over---the advertisements for the Yaesu VX-1R really miniature handheld radio. Dual bands, wide-range receive, and smaller than some matchboxes. Dick Tracy would be proud---the only accessory which seems to be missing is the wristband for on-the-arm mounting.



Nice radio. How does it work on a bicycle? I honestly can't tell you, because my Kenwood TH-77A is the one I use when I'm bike-mobile. But I recently bought a VX-1R, and I've used it quite a bit under various conditions and I can give you some thoughts:

- **Size and weight:** Is there any question? A tiny 3.2"x1.9"x1", and just over 4 ounces, including battery and antenna. Even your ardent racing cyclist doesn't have the slightest bit to complain about.
- **Frequencies and bands:** Receive/transmit on 2m and 440. Continuous receive coverage from 76 MHz to 999 MHz, including most TV audio and aircraft. AM and FM broadcast come in clearly, as does 220 MHz. No complaints here!
- **Power:** 1/2 watt is probably adequate, but a bit on the skimpy side. Better bring a better antenna than the rubber-dummy-load which is included. Battery life is surprisingly long.
- **Audio:** A bit thin unless the speaker is turned up high to distortion levels. I'd recommend an earphone in a noisy (bicycle) environment. This radio uses the new Yaesu single-plug connection for speaker and microphone. If you have a FT-50R, it is the same connector.

All in all, a very nice radio. I use it as a "second radio" which I always have with me, as it fits unobtrusively in my shirt pocket. However it is always my "second" radio, and thus a luxury, rather than my primary.

I've already told you that I count on my Kenwood TH-77A on the bike, rather than the Yaesu VX-1R. The reason is that there is really no size-and-weight difference in the "total

package". To the basic VX-1R radio, for on-the-bike use, I would add:

1. Extra battery pack (the Yaesu pack is small---better add two)
2. In-the-ear microphone
3. PTT switch on the handlebars
4. Mounting bracket
5. Decent (external) antenna

Suddenly, the charm of having a radio that is smaller than your antenna isn't so attractive. The radio just isn't the biggest part of the rig anymore. And with the Kenwood I get 5W output instead of 1/2 watt. Still, I'll keep the Yaesu. If forced to carry minimal electronics, I'll always carry my REX card (a credit-card-sized digital diary), my VX-1R, and my cellphone (my wife doesn't have her ham ticket, so the cellphone is the only way she can keep in touch with me). On the bike, I'll dispense with all three in favor of the handlebar-mounted TH-77A. But then again, I'll tuck the VX-1R into a pocket as my spare radio. After all, it weighs hardly anything, and you never know when an extra radio will come in handy.

---Skip La Fetra, AA6WK, Sunnyvale CA, Asst. Editor  
[lafetra@ricochet.net](mailto:lafetra@ricochet.net)

## LETTERS

Dear BMHA,

I really think you new members should check out the back issues. A few months ago, I ordered all the back issues of the BMHA Newsletter, to give me a complete reference library of 35 issues. I was amazed at the range of material! This collection puts the following resources at my fingertips:

- \* 20 articles on antennas, ten on VHF equipment mounting, seven on HF equipment mounting, and a whole series on "getting started" in bike-mobiling.
- \* 24 reports on bicycle trips and public service events
- \* reviews of new bike-mobile-friendly radio equipment
- \* designs of two dozen QSL cards related to bike-mobiling
- \* discussions on technical and safety topics, from a unique bike-mobile perspective, including "noise sources", hot weather riding, and solar power
- \* historical reports on the evolution of our unique hobby, the earliest going back to WW2.

At the BMHA Forum at Dayton HamVention '99 I had the pleasure of meeting three other serious HF QRP bike mobiler's (Russ KB8U, Jim K8IQY ex N8UN, and Ned WC4X). Interestingly, I had already seen pictures and read articles on each of their set-ups and accomplishments in the BMHA Newsletter back issues!

Although my primary interest is HF QRP bike mobiling, re-reading the back issues of the newsletter is really helping to expand my horizons. Maybe I'll get into 2m/70cm. But the VHF antenna will have to go at the FRONT of the bike!

---John Cumming, VE3JC  
192 Wellington St. [jbcumming@wwdc.com](mailto:jbcumming@wwdc.com)  
Delaware, Ont. Canada N0L 1E0

# TRAVEL

## Chasing Low Power HF Along the Pacific

This year's tour along the Pacific Crest Bicycle Trail was quite different. For the first time I took my son Ian, age 14, along. He's great on the flats but not a hill-climber yet, so I had to modify the route. We started in Vancouver, British Columbia the last week of July and rode through Canada for two days. I had my home-built Cascade transmitter/receiver with me, which puts out around 5-10 watts on 75 and 20 meters (3.8 and 14.3 MHz), for single sideband (voice) hamming. The first campground we stayed in near Ft. Langley was a disappointment, because we didn't get any contacts (using a small, home-made loop antenna) and we got rained on—a lot. Not being well-prepared, I had to go out and get a rain suit for Ian, while I used a poncho.

## Hills Hurt, But Contacts Come In

Later we stayed in a KOA campground near Burlington and I was able to set up my better all-band dipole antenna and have a few contacts with North American hams.

We had planned to keep riding south and take the ferry over to Port Townsend and then on to Seattle, but I hadn't researched the route well enough. We ran into hills that were too much for Ian, so he and I dropped out and spent a couple days motelling it in Oak Harbor, while the four other cyclists went on. There, I threw a random wire antenna out the door to a wooden electrical pole and had some more low-power voice contacts around North America, still using a solar-charged battery. (Note: I would never use an electrical pole as a permanent or semi-permanent antenna support! In my temporary setup, I isolated the wire antenna from the pole with an insulator. Always take care and never bring your antenna close to electrical wires.)

## Bands Open Up In Baja

Immediately upon returning home to the San Francisco Bay Area, the rest of the family and Ian and I flew down to the city of San Jose del Cabo, on the southern tip of Baja California, Mexico (around 1,000 miles south of the border). It was our last chance at a family vacation before my daughter went off to college in Boston. We were situated in a large resort, which was nicely air-conditioned, given the 90-degree temperatures. While the family was swimming and generally lazing around, I set up my Ten Tec Scout transceiver and enlisted the help of the grounds crew in attaching the end of my 104-ft. random wire antenna to the top of a light pole outside, using an insulator. We were there for six days and the first several days yielded only a few contacts in the 48 states. But after that atmospheric

conditions really brightened, and I had many voice contacts around North America, morse code contacts in Europe and Russia, and one brief voice contact with Australia. Not bad, considering the primitive antenna, simple antenna tuner, only 20 watts of power and the antenna being blocked on one side by the seven-story resort. Also it was nice being a "foreign" station for once.

## Legal in Mexico

I had gone the whole route of obtaining an operating permit from the Mexican government, which wasn't easy. My call was **KD6JUI portable XE2**. I have saved the end-fed wire antenna I used. Its length of 104 feet was totally accidental, but it loaded so easily on all bands 40 through 10 meters (7.2 through 28.4 MHz) that I want to save it to use again.



*Bil and son Ian at the start in Vancouver—before the rain! Note the solar panel on top Bil's handle bar bag.*

Now is a great time to be operating on the HF bands (3.8 through 28.4 MHz) because we're headed toward the peak of the 11-year solar cycle. That means more bands are open for long-distance communications (especially the upper bands such as 15, 12, and 10 meters) more often. And less power is required. If you haven't already done so, get your higher class ham license and an HF transceiver, and have fun communicating with exotic-sounding countries.

Anyone interested in joining a week-long bicycle hamming tour next summer please contact me!

—Bil Paul KD6JUI

[bbp@alchemist-light.com](mailto:bbp@alchemist-light.com)

PO Box 1275, Belmont, CA 94002

## Membership Application

MemAPPL4.wps 8/25/98 fpc newmem IE-mail newHAM ANONham News IQ's frost hwpk fenv

**BICYCLE MOBILE HAMS OF AMERICA**

date \_\_\_\_\_

**Box 4009, Boulder, CO 80306-4009**

Individual \$10 \_\_\_\_\_ New member? \_\_\_\_\_ Renewal? \_\_\_\_\_

(US or Canada)

Family \$15 \_\_\_\_\_ Foreign \$15 \_\_\_\_\_ Donation \$ \_\_\_\_\_

(limit: two persons)

Make check payable to BMHA, in US dollars or international money order.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Call \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ License Class \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail address \_\_\_\_\_ @ \_\_\_\_\_

Age \_\_\_\_\_ Most miles bicycled in one day \_\_\_\_\_

## BMHA's Official Logo

The next time you need to order new QSL cards, don't forget to include the BMHA logo in your design. Here's the official logo, as designed by Russ Dwarshuis, KB8U.

BICYCLE MOBILE



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# **BMHA NEWSLETTER**

Bicycle Mobile Hams of America  
PO Box 4009  
Boulder, CO 80306-4009

## **First Class Mail**

## **COMMENTS**

....Please change my callsign from KC5NMG to K5POP. No, I didn't upgrade, I'm still a tech plus, but once I finish my Bachelor Degree (Dec 2000?) I will get back to working on the upgrade.

You asked how come I chose POP for my vanity call. I chose it in remembrance of my maternal grandmother who called me Johnny POP. I was raised on a cotton farm back in the days of the Poppin' Johnny tractor made by John Deere, so I assume that's how she came up with that nickname.

My grandmother was one of the most positive influences on my life as I was growing up—and the other 19 grandkids she had will surely agree! Though she's been gone almost 20 years, her strong love and good cooking are still a legend in our family.

---Johnny Wallace, K5POP, San Antonio, TX

.....After that long move from Massachusetts, Joanne and I are adjusting pretty well to life in the desert. My commute to work is, to say the least, very interesting! Each day it seems I'm commuting through a different part of Noah's ark. One morning there will be rabbits EVERYWHERE! Then coyotes... then BUGS (and I just washed the car), field mice, and (check this out) TARANTULAS! Yeah, I couldn't believe it. For three days it was like the tarantulas suddenly decided to move East. I'm still looking for the infamous Oryx, an antelope-like critter that doesn't care if a car is coming.

---Scott Farrell, KE4WMF, White Sands, NM

....I have been meaning to write and tell you what is going on in Northeast Louisiana for some time, so now is a good time.

I haven't done much with ham radio for quite awhile, but believe I will as I will finally retire from consulting work in October (I will be 80 and it does seem time).

As for cycling, I am still very active, as a matter of fact I just purchased a Vision Recumbent (used) and as soon as the new tires come in I'll give it a go. In May, I did a group ride of 400 miles through Louisiana over six days. (150 riders). I head for the National Senior Olympics in Orlando in October. I will do the 5k & 10k time trials.

Remember, you put Joe Walker in touch with me several years ago about racing across America with the 70-year-old group. I thought about it, and Joe & I talked, but didn't think I was up to the caliber he needed. I do support (financially) his group's efforts each year however.

---Miles K Luke, KC5FRB, Monroe LA

....I am involved with a local volunteer bicycle group that, with recognition and support from the police department, monitors for safety the bike paths, off-road trails, streets and railroad beds in our community. Since our inception three years ago, one of our major problems has been communication. Because of this, the members are now in the process of acquiring the tech no-code license. Any assistance and information you could forward to me in regards to Hams on bicycles would be greatly appreciated.

---Conrad Perreault, N1POG, Keene NH

*(Several issues of the BMHA Newsletter containing pertinent articles were sent same day.--Ed.)*